



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
NAVY REGION NORTHWEST  
1100 HUNLEY ROAD  
SILVERDALE, WA 98315-1100

3030  
Ser N00/0983  
December 4, 2020

Mr. Don Hoch  
State of Washington  
Parks and Recreation Commission  
1111 Israel Road S.W.  
P.O. Box 42650  
Olympia, WA 98504-2650

Dear Mr. Hoch:

SUBJECT: U.S. NAVY SPECIALIZED TRAINING AT WASHINGTON STATE PARKS

Thank you for continuing our ongoing discussions and collaboration. I received your letter and in response, I have addressed each topic of concern:

**Monitoring Plans.** The Navy has not finalized a plan for archaeological reporting between the Navy and the State Historic Preservation Officer as we anticipate that communication between the Navy and the State Parks technical staff is necessary to develop a process that best aligns with the existing Parks Archaeology Program. Since this plan is not yet complete, I recommend that we allow direct communication between Mr. David Grant, the Navy's archaeological lead and your archaeology program manager, Mr. Dan Meatte. I understand that they have worked together before and know each other's work. Direct communication will allow both parties to develop procedures that limit distribution of sensitive operational and site location information and assure the protection of public resources.

**Alternatives Analysis.** The Environmental Assessment (EA) considered areas within the western State of Washington as part of the proposed action. These areas included State Parks, public property, private property, and Department of Defense areas. The EA first considered a pool of geographic areas that included the State of Washington, State of Alaska, northern California, and Newport, Rhode Island (Section 2.4 of the EA) as areas that would be suited to support the proposed training. However as part of the screening process (Section 2.2 of the EA), the initial analysis applied three factors (training, safety, and logistics) to determine which areas could actually support cold-water training by Special Operations and satisfy the training requirements. Alaska, California and Rhode Island were "screened out" based on the application of these factors and therefore were eliminated from further analysis in the EA. The Navy has pursued right-of-entry agreements for Special Operations training at some Washington municipal or county locations, as well as at a few privately owned locations. In general, these locations are much smaller than the State Park sites, and the types of training events that can be done at these places are limited by size. Additionally, some of these other locations have important specific features or structures not found anywhere else, and are needed to support specific training, separate from training that would be conducted in State Parks. While helpful, these other sites generally do not offer the variety and diversity of challenges to trainees that the State Park sites would offer.

**Public Surveillance.** The Navy will not be conducting surveillance of any members of the public, either through trainees or unmanned aircraft. Special Operators will be attempting to surveil designated military personnel, who are essentially actors putting on a show for the trainees to observe. Prior to commencing training or placing a single step onto the State Parks, trainees first undergo a number of briefings (in reflection of real-world operations) that identify the specific individuals or action to observe. These individuals or actions are always acted out by Service Members who receive direction from the Safety Cadre, and they conduct themselves in a way that is completely benign to the public. In the unlikely event that a trainee is discovered by the public, all trainees are provided Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) prior to the conduct of training with a rehearsed statement if such an incident occurs: "I am a U.S. Service Member in the Navy conducting military training. Our unit has an approval with State Parks to train at this location but will leave the area immediately." In this unlikely scenario, the Safety Cadre would end the training and reiterate the same statement to the public or interested parties. All materials are immediately picked up, carried to a pre-designated vehicle in the area and depart. Concerning unmanned aircraft, Naval Special Warfare Command does not intend to utilize unmanned aircraft within State Parks, and has no specific plans to use unmanned aircraft during the training proposed for State Park locations.

**Promoting Public Relations.** I agree that Navy public affairs staff should work with the State Parks staff to manage communication efforts that both protect security and inform park visitors, as deemed necessary. As an extension of continued public outreach, my Public Affairs Officer, Mr. Sean Hughes is in communications with your staff, specifically, Ms. Anna Gill.

**Process Participation.** It is important that we address this topic, as it seemed to come up at the end of the meeting and could benefit from a bit more dialogue. Federal law prohibits the Navy from using funds to lobby or to encourage the public to influence their representatives, and the Navy cannot use public money for publicity purposes. In this case, as in all other similar situations, the Navy has made no effort to solicit support or encourage anyone in the public to provide a supportive opinion or message. While a few people may have submitted supportive or "pro-Navy" comments on the EA, the purpose of public participation in the National Environmental Policy Act process was not to "sell" the idea to the public but to improve the decision-making process with public knowledge and critique. The Navy does not have a compilation of supportive sentiments because we rightfully make no effort to produce them. I know that this does not help you gauge the interests or feelings of the public, but I am sure you can understand why the Navy does not solicit supportive commentary. However, as we discussed briefly during the public meeting, some individuals have taken it upon themselves to broadcast misinformation about the Navy's request. For example, on December 1, 2020 the Whidbey News Times published a Letter-to-the-Editor that asked people to oppose the Navy's request to train in State Parks because the purpose of the training is to "observe the public," among other false claims. I think statements such as this, which explicitly ask people to submit opposing commentary using incorrect information, may be having some sort of impact on the public commentary you are receiving.



3030  
Ser N00/0983  
December 4, 2020

Again, thank you for your letter and I look forward to more ongoing discussions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (360) 315-5000 or [stephen.barnett@navy.mil](mailto:stephen.barnett@navy.mil).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. D. Barnett", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

S. D. BARNETT  
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy  
Commander, Navy Region Northwest